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SIPDIS

FOR NEA/I/PM, EB/IFD AND EUR/WE

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TAGS: PREL EAID I2 FR

SUBJECT: GOF OFFERS TRAINING TO IRAQI POLICE AND JUDGES,
SEEKS TO ADVANCE INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISM

REF: PARIS 1716

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons
1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) In recent discussions with us on Iraq, working-level MFA officials have described new French training programs for Iraqis under the EU umbrella and preliminary GoF thinking on the U.S.-proposed international coordination mechanism for Iraq assistance. The new GoF assistance is part of the recently approved EU "rule of law" package for Iraq, and will consist of a four-week training program for 160 Iraqi police officers in France this summer, followed by a month-long training program for 30 Iraqi magistrates in Bordeaux in the fall. The proposed police training is separate from an earlier GoF offer to train some 1,500 Iraqi gendarmes in France and Qatar, to which the GoF has not received a reply from the Iraqi government since President Chirac raised the issue with visiting IIG President Yawer in mid-January.

¶2. (C) MFA Iraq desk officer Renaud Salins commented to us during a March 11 discussion on Iranian interference in Iraq (reftel) that the summer and fall training programs put the GoF at the top of the EU in terms of contributions to the new rule of law program, which aims to train some 800 Iraqi officials. He added that it was a strange, but good feeling for France to be at the head of any contribution list for Iraq.

¶3. (C) Salins also informed us that the GoF is seeking to encourage EU reflection on the proposed international coordination mechanism for Iraq, first floated by the U.S. earlier this year. The GoF's preliminary thinking on the coordination mechanism was that it should, of course, be led by the Iraqi government, and that it was up to Iraq's Transitional Government to define Iraq's immediate assistance needs. At the same time, the GoF believed that the UN could play an important role within the coordination mechanism to help the Iraqi government identify assistance needs and create a sort of clearinghouse for international aid. The EU should play an important role as well in the coordination mechanism, still to be defined. Salins commented that the only EU member which had showed enthusiasm for advancing the coordination mechanism idea was the UK, which was keen on promoting an international conference on Iraq to take place in May. Salins was unsure whether the May timeframe was realistic, given the continued delay in formation of the ITG.

In any case, French, UK and EC working-level representatives had met in Brussels the week of March 7 to explore further the international conference and coordination mechanism ideas.

¶4. (C) UK Embassy First Secretary Tom Fletcher (protect) informed us March 16 that the UK continued to consult with the French on the coordination mechanism and conference proposals. He described the UK and France as differing on one point: France was more inclined to limit the coordination mechanism on capacity building activities for Iraq, while the UK was leaning towards a more ambitious, open-ended mandate. Fletcher also confirmed that the UK embassy in Baghdad had approached IIG VP Ibrahim al-Ja'fari on the conference proposal and found him open to the idea. Fletcher also clarified that while the venue for such a conference remained to be determined, the logical choice was Brussels, with the EC hosting.

¶5. (C) Comment: The GoF continues to move in a positive direction in offering more assistance to Iraq, primarily via training programs for Iraqis in France. At the same time, the French red-lines on no troops in Iraq and qualified assistance to the NATO training mission remain in place, and the GoF continues to be averse to sending any personnel into Iraq for reconstruction or assistance projects, as long as security conditions are difficult. End comment.

¶6. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
Leach